



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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IDNR Planning Illinois Deer Hunting Changes for 2014-15

Hunters invited to weigh in through online survey

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) plans to revise deer population objectives for more than 40 counties beginning with the 2014-15 deer season, following a two-year review of Illinois deer management efforts.

The IDNR is also asking deer hunters to provide input, through an online survey, on a proposal to end the recent practice of selling remaining firearm deer permits over-the-counter through the end of the firearm season, except for youth under age 16.

“The IDNR manages deer by county and state population goals, and as a result of our two-year review we’re making changes for many counties. In these counties our strategy is shifting from deer herd reduction to maintaining or increasing deer populations,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller. “I am committed to professional management of our wildlife, and as always, we want to hear from hunters, landowners, and all other stakeholders on our deer management program.”

Current Illinois deer management objectives were adopted as a result recommendations of the state's Joint Legislative Task Force on Deer Population Control. Those recommendations called for a 14 percent reduction in the statewide deer herd from peak levels in an effort to reduce conflicts between deer and people, such as deer/automobile accidents, agricultural crop damage, and to ensure the continued health and well-being of Illinois' deer herd. The statewide objective was met in 2012, although a number of counties still remained above their individual objectives at that time.

IDNR biologists have determined that some counties' deer population objectives can be increased, particularly in counties with smaller deer populations, while still meeting the statewide goal. Biologists have identified 41 counties for which IDNR can adjust season regulations and permit quotas to reflect these higher population goals.

As counties reach their individual population objective, the IDNR takes steps necessary to lessen deer harvest pressure in those counties so that deer populations can stabilize around the objective level. During the past two years, 11 counties have been closed to the Late Winter Antlerless Deer Season because their objectives had been achieved. Based on analysis of the 2013 deer population and harvest data to be completed later this spring, further county closures for the 2014-15 Late Winter Deer Season and permit quota reductions in other firearm seasons may occur as a result of the changes to county objectives and/or changes in county deer population levels

The review of IDNR deer management included a series of public meetings conducted throughout the state in 2013, along with surveys of hunters, landowners, and other Illinois citizens regarding their attitudes about the state's deer population and the IDNR deer management program. Illinois' deer population objectives are intended to reflect the best effort to balance the interests of all Illinoisans – including hunters, wildlife observers, farmers, homeowners, outfitters, nursery owners, conservationists, motorists, businessmen, and many others. Each of these groups can have a very different perspective on the desired size of the deer population in Illinois. The IDNR takes the diverse, and often opposing, public input and works to develop a deer population objective that is acceptable to the majority of people in a given area.

An online survey available through the IDNR website asks hunters whether the recent practice of selling remaining firearm permits over-the-counter through the end of the season should end for all hunters except youth under age 16. The survey is available to hunters at www.dnr.illinois.gov.

Data from the 2013-14 Illinois deer hunting seasons will be incorporated into planning for the 2014-15 deer seasons. Hunters in Illinois harvested a preliminary total of 148,569 deer during all 2013-14 seasons, compared with a total harvest for all seasons of 180,811 in 2012-13.

Illinois was among a number of Midwestern and Great Lakes region states in which deer harvest declined in 2013-14, including Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio. Biologists cited a number of factors for the decline, especially during November/December firearm seasons, including adverse weather, herd reductions to achieve management goals and, in some locations, deer mortality due to outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD).

Hunters in Illinois took a preliminary total of 74,355 deer during the 2013 Illinois Firearm Deer Season (Nov. 22-24 and Dec. 5-8, 2013). Harvest totaled 3,546 deer during the 2013 Illinois Muzzleloader-Only Deer Season (Dec. 13-15, 2013), and 3,012 deer during the 2013 Illinois Youth Deer Season (Oct. 12-14, 2013).

During the 2013-14 Illinois Archery Deer Season (Oct. 1, 2013-Jan. 19, 2014), hunters in Illinois took a preliminary total of 57,290 deer, compared with the archery deer harvest of 59,805 in the 2012-13 archery season.

The 2013-14 Late Winter Antlerless Only and Special CWD deer seasons (Dec. 26-29, 2013 and Jan. 17-19, 2014) had a combined preliminary harvest total for both seasons of 10,366 deer, compared with a harvest of 14,723 deer taken during those seasons in 2012-13. Hunters in Boone, DeKalb, Grundy, Jo Daviess, Kendall, LaSalle, McHenry, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties and Kane County west of Ill. Rt. 47 participated in the CWD season, while another 55 counties were open for the Late Winter season. The Special CWD season is used to assist in controlling the spread of chronic wasting disease in the Illinois deer herd.

Tables with preliminary county harvest totals for all the 2013-14 Illinois deer seasons, as well as comparable figures for the 2012-13 seasons, can be found on the IDNR website at this link:

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/news/Documents/IllinoisPreliminaryDeerHarvestTotalsJan2014.pdf>

For additional information on the IDNR deer management program, public meetings, and hunter/citizen surveys, go to the IDNR website at this link:

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/wildlife/Pages/DeerOpenHouse.aspx>

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